

Great Barrington 25 March 1817

My dear Sir

Yours of the 27 of Dec. I recieved and read with great pleasure. It was the first letter that has reached me from Bridgewater since I left it - a period of nearly two years. - Yet there was one part of it which, while it equally excited and disappointed my curiosity, gave me some alarm. You inform me that you are ———. How shall I understand this ———? What meaning shall I give this blank? It made my blood run cold in every vein and my hair rise "like quills upon the fretful porcupine" when I reflected that the word "married" might complete the sentence, and possibly give the meaning so mysteriously withheld - *Sic omen avertant!* Yet, if there was no special enormity behind the curtain, it seems to me that you might have spoken out - and you would do me great injustice to suppose that I should not be very much gratified to know any circumstance relating to your present situation. In your next

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Mr. John C. Howard
Bridgewater
Massachusetts

Mr. E. J. Howard